

News Release

Edwin B. Forsythe

National Wildlife Refuge

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Two Barnegat Bay Coves Closed Due to Public Safety and Wildlife Concerns

Brick, NJ – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has closed two Barnegat Bay coves due to public safety concerns. F-Cove and T-Cove are located in Brick Township and are part of Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge.

According to Refuge Manager Virginia Rettig, the coves have become popular gathering places for large numbers of boaters, and law enforcement officers have observed alcohol and drug use and other unsafe activities taking place. To ensure public safety, the Service closed the coves to all public use this spring in cooperation with the New Jersey State Police Marine Services Bureau and township leaders. Barrels have been installed at the cove openings with signs notifying boaters of the closure.

Rettig will provide additional information about the Service's management authority and its decision to close the coves at the Brick Township Council meeting on May 8.

The Service's jurisdiction over the coves was confirmed in 2011. Named for their shapes, the coves are man-made lagoons that were previously tidal marsh.

National wildlife refuges are public lands where wildlife comes first. They are also places where people can visit to enjoy wildlife, said Rettig.

"Any activity we permit in the coves has to be tied to the needs and requirements of wildlife first," she said.

The Service is required by law to complete an environmental review before allowing public uses on national wildlife refuges. F and T coves may be re-opened in the future for people to enjoy certain wildlife-dependent activities that could include kayaking and hiking

"While F-Cove was a favorite destination for many, the health and the protection of the Forsythe Refuge and Barnegat Bay are too important to ignore. We cannot continue putting them at risk,"

said Brick Mayor Stephen Acropolis. “That being said, the Township will work with Department of the Interior throughout the visitor services review process to restore appropriate public access to the cove and a linkage with Traders Cove.”

“Down the road, F-Cove and T-Cove will be valuable both for resource protection in Barnegat Bay and wildlife-dependent recreational activities,” added Rettig.

The salt marshes and channels surrounding Barnegat Bay produce food for migratory birds. They are also nurseries for fish, crabs and turtles.

For more information about Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge, contact the refuge at (609) 652-1665 or visit www.fws.gov/northeast/forsythe/ .

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